PROJECT MUSE®

*Triviale Minne? Konventionalität und Trivialisierung in
spätmittelalterlichen Minnereden (review)*

Debra L. Stoudt

JEGP, Journal of English and Germanic Philology, Volume 108, Number
1, January 2009, pp. 88-90 (Review)

Published by University of Illinois Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/egp.0.0025>

➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/255709>

Displaying both detail and depth, Brinker-von der Heyde's book presents a nuanced and complex picture of the medieval literary world. The one or two glitches this reader found (for example, the modern German translation of a Walter von der Vogelweide quotation appears to be missing, p. 113) do not detract from the overall quality and erudition of this book. This book deserves a wide audience, one that includes medievalists whose specialty is not German.

ALISON BERINGER

Colgate University

TRIVIALE MINNE? KONVENTIONALITÄT UND TRIVIALISIERUNG IN SPÄTMITTELALTERLICHEN MINNEREDEN. Edited by Ludger Lieb and Otto Neudeck. *Quellen und Forschungen zur Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte* 40 (274). Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006. Pp. VIII + 270; 24 figures. \$145.

Triviale Minne? Konventionalität und Trivialisierung in spätmittelalterlichen Minnereden is a collection of eleven essays presented originally at a conference held June 3–6, 2004, at Schloss Eckberg in Dresden. The *Minnereden* are relatively brief texts—between 50 and 600 verses—in which a first-person author, usually anonymous, characterizes and discusses the problems, conditions, and rules of *Minne*, frequently employing conventional content and language. Although Lieb and Neudeck identify a number of common features among the *Minnereden* in the opening paragraphs of their introduction, they note that according to modern criteria it is difficult to identify the texts as a distinct genre. The more than 500 extant *Minnereden* constitute the largest group of secular German texts of the late Middle Ages; nonetheless, they have garnered neither high regard nor extensive attention from scholars, circumstances that perhaps invite the designation “trivial.” The editors examine in detail the present-day multivalence of this term and its applicability to late medieval texts. The strongest evidence of the “trivial” nature of the *Minnereden* may be the lack of original content and frequent thematic and linguistic repetition. Other modern nuances of the term seem less relevant, e.g., the identification of *Trivialliteratur* with “low” literature, since a dichotomy between “high” and “low” literature is barely discernible in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Although critics today view *Trivialliteratur* as works from the lower class, anonymous, mass-produced, and inexpensive, the image is one to which the *Minnereden* hardly conform, especially given that they were transmitted almost exclusively in manuscript form. Concluding their semantic discussion, the editors recall the Latin root of “trivial” and its relationship to the *trivium*, emphasizing the pivotal role of rhetoric, one of the *artes triviales*, in the late medieval texts. Unlike the poetry of the High Middle Ages, shaped by a social elite personally engaged in the courtly love experience, the texts of the later generations were written by aficionados of the courtly love tradition, educated individuals acquainted with the art of *Minne* as well as those interested in learning about it, who edited and modified familiar material to reflect a novel understanding of it. The *Minnereden* were texts intended to be read, not songs to be sung, and were composed from the perspective of a waning courtly culture.

Lieb and Neudeck briefly characterize the grouping of the essays. The first four analyze typical repetitions and in particular the poetics and rhetoric of the language of love found in selected *Minnereden*. The subsequent four offer insights into the broader cultural context of the works, especially the social and linguistic framework that informs them and the evolution of the socio-literary circle in

which the works existed; the role of the writer and that of the reader(s) are of particular relevance. The focus of the final three contributions transcends the *Sitz im Leben* to examine textual production in terms of its relationship to broader societal constructs, e.g., late medieval feudal society. As contributors deal with specific rhetorical, philological, and cultural dimensions of selected texts, they also address the pivotal question of the conference: to what extent do the *Minnereden* demonstrate and propagate *triviale Minne*?

The contributions represent a rich and complementary collection of studies. Susanne Köbele's essay focuses on the rhetorical device of hyperbole and its conventional and unconventional use in *Minnereden*. Jens Haustein offers a brief discussion of *geblünte Rede*, "flowery style," as a convention, arguing that the varied uses of rhetorical devices contribute to a tension between the standard courtly love poetry tradition and the transgressing of its rules by later generations of poets. Manfred Kern explores the function of *accumulatio* (the amassing of metaphors), the novel combinations occurring in the texts, and the relationships between German texts and those in the Italian tradition. The *Liebeserklärung*, the declaration of love, in Middle English literature is examined by Thomas Honegger, with particular attention to the nature and purpose of the speech act in specific texts. Jacob Klingner's focus is the transmission of "Der Traum"; from his examination of manuscript and printed versions he posits textual variants based upon *Umschreiben* ("paraphrase"), *Ümschreiben* ("rewriting"), and *Weiterschreiben* ("continuation"). Ann Marie Rasmussen deals with the construction of masculinity in the *Minnereden*, delineating the image of the chivalric youth and that of adult manhood in selected texts from a Middle Low German compilation manuscript. The evolution of the nature of courtly love and the image of Lady Love are treated by Wolfgang Achnitz, who relates sacred and secular images of *Minne* in texts as well as in illustrations. Continuing the broader artistic focus, Stefan Matter characterizes graphic representations of courtly love that include a *Minnekästchen*, wall paintings, and tapestries; accompanied by a wealth of black-and-white images, the analyses provide a welcome complement to the textual and literary focus of the other entries. Susanne Brügel deals with the role of the speaker, the *Ich*, in the "Minnelehre" of Johann von Konstanz and examines how the speaker's reflections on love/Love and his relationship to it/Her manifest themselves in the narrative structure. Margreth Egidi applies aspects of Yuri Lotman's semiotic theories and Jacques Derrida's structuralist arguments to her discussion of "Der Minne Gericht" of Der Ellende Knabe, with an emphasis on the question of the relationship between subject and structure. Rounding out the collection is Ralf Schlechtweg-Jahn's re-evaluation of Hadamar von Laber's "Jagd" as a serial text and his investigation of the innovative combinations of textual elements. The texts discussed in the volume span the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries and include works identified with high-profile individuals such as Johann von Konstanz and Klara Hätzlerin as well as those whose author is unknown. The majority of studies concentrate on the German courtly love tradition, but there are also forays into comparable developments on the continent and contemporaneous traditions in England. Especially useful and thought-provoking are the various approaches to the questions of how and why the texts were transmitted and how the texts conform to or diverge from the tradition of *Minne* and that of the *Minnereden* themselves. The occasional overlap in the texts discussed as well as in the critical approaches employed produces a unifying effect. Less satisfying are the studies in which modern theoretical frameworks are applied to the late medieval

texts: the inclusion of theoretical jargon does little to elucidate the arguments, and at times the relevance of contemporary theories seems suspect.

Whereas the concept of the "trivial" is fully developed already in the introduction, facets of the *Minnereden* emerge in more piecemeal fashion, with noteworthy historic, thematic, and linguistic aspects revealed in each essay. At times significant information is relegated to footnotes, e.g., the discussion of the question of genre (p. 2), but this and the occasional unevenness in style and incongruity in terminology, not unexpected in a collection of studies by different authors, detract little from the overall value of the contents. The editors note that the most useful scholarly inquiries into *Minnereden* were conducted in the 1960s and 1970s, a point substantiated by the references in the introduction and by the literature cited by the contributors. This collection certainly will take its place alongside previous scholarship and should stimulate renewed interest in the texts. Indeed, Lieb and at least one contributor currently are engaged in work on the *Handbuch Minnereden*, a project of the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung being conducted at the Technische Universität Dresden. More scholarship on these texts is sure to appear in the near future.

The volume concludes with brief closing remarks ("Exposé der Tagung"), a list of abbreviations, and three useful indices: one of texts discussed, another of manuscripts and printed versions referenced, and the third with names and topics that appear throughout the volume. In their summary of the conference discussions, the editors identify two foci: one analyzing the "trivial" as text-immanent and the other examining its functions in cultural practice (p. 260); they reiterate key points in the essays and catalog questions left unanswered by them. Not surprisingly, there is the suggestion that methods and arguments employed with regard to *Minnereden* might be of benefit in the study of other types of literature that flourished in the late Middle Ages, such as *Meistersang*. The conclusion drawn by the conference organizers and participants will undoubtedly be echoed by readers of this volume: although the *Minnereden* may be identified as *Trivialliteratur*, they are anything but trivial.

DEBRA L. STOUT

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

DER MITTELALTERLICHE UND DER NEUZEITLICHE WALTHER. BEITRÄGE ZU MOTIVIK, POETIK, ÜBERLIEFERUNGSGESCHICHTE UND REZEPTION. Edited by Thomas Bein. Walther-Studien, 5. New York, Bern: Peter Lang, 2007. \$59.95.

The selection of Walther von der Vogelweide as the subject of an entire series (Walther-Studien) as inaugurated five years ago, has proven to be enormously fruitful. This fifth volume complements the previous ones in its offering of several careful studies, although here the parameters are broader, raising the question of the contemporary image of Walther. The diverse contributions address the past, present, and future of Walther studies to show that the history of Walther reception is important for understanding the formation of German cultural identity right into the twentieth century and that his poetry has only recently lost its appeal with the educated public. The second half of the volume re-examines issues concerning textual variants and theoretical approaches to narrative by applying them to Walther's songs.

Part 1 features Walther in public schools. Jelko Peters's "'Es ist überflüssig diesen Dichter für die Jugend zu empfehlen.' Zum Stellenwert der Lyrik Walthers von der Vogelweide im altdutschen Unterricht des 19. Jahrhunderts" argues that the curriculum